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Reflections on Cultural Dynamics, Symbolic Politics, and Educational Impacts: A Case in Contemporary Literature

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Abstract So far, although literature has been widely discussed, there is still a lack of in-depth study of its function as a medium for the reconstruction of traditional values in the face of modernity. This research aims to uncover literature that not only reflects cultural reality but also serves as a tool to reconstruct traditional values in the context of modernity. The source of research data is the novel *Women Who Cry to the Black Moon*. The research method uses hermeneutics and semiotics, using deconstruction reading. The results of the study show that ideas, values, and norms are dominant in cultural dynamics. The religious system plays an important role in maintaining the social structure. In turn, literature not only functions as a support for the social order, but as an instrument that represents symbolic politics, which has an impact on education. An important implication of this study is that local traditions can be sites of critical reflection that allow space for ideological deconstruction.

Keywords: *Literature, Novel, Literary anthropology, Symbol politics, Education in literature, Language*

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1. Introduction

Local literature and traditions are not just static cultural heritage trapped in the trajectory of history. It is a dynamic symbolic network that is structured by power relations, norms, history, and epistemology of the local community. The political interweaving of symbols formed in local cultural rituals and artefacts not only forms a collective consciousness but also reproduces a hierarchy of norms and social that affect the social structure at large (Bakhtin, 2004; Barthes, 1964), including education. In this context, contemporary literature becomes a forum full of potential to map and deconstruct these symbolic relationships (Derrida, 2001; Graña, 2020; Suprapto et al., 2023). For this reason, literature not only reflects social practices but is also the arena where ideology and symbolism are met, fought, and transformed (Brandel, 2020; Trexler, 2015; Wilding, 2024). Thus, literature

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is a dialectical medium that represents a very complex interaction between tradition and symbols. This not only has implications for cultural management but also for the formation of educational values that are the social foundation of society.

On the one hand, there is still a significant theoretical vacuum in contemporary literary studies, which deeply examines the interaction between local traditions, symbolic politics, and its impact on universal education. For this reason, existing literary research still focuses on gender analysis (Iovino & Oppermann, 2012; Ogunyemi, 2022), sociology (Singer, 2011; Thumala Olave, 2022), psychology (Potter et al., 2023; Yani & Samanik, 2023), and ecology (Maina-Okori et al., 2018; Zapf, 2006). That is, little attention is paid to the articulation of educational messages in literature, especially in literature that raises the issue of tradition, such as *the novel Women Who Cry to the Black Moon*. On the other hand, the literary anthropological approach, which emphasizes the representation of cultural symbols and local traditions (Stoller, 2015), is also rarely used to explain the process of forming educational values in literature. This problem shows the urgent need for a more holistic study of the interpretation that literature is not only considered as narrative fiction but also as a mirror of cultural dynamics that have an impact on education internalized by society. Therefore, this research was conducted to fill this gap by focusing on the integration of literary anthropology, symbolic politics, and the impact of education through reading fictional literature, which represents local traditions.

This research is considered to have profound significance because of its contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of the central role of literature as an educational medium full of symbols so that it will have an impact on a multicultural society that continues to develop. By focusing the study on the relationship between tradition and symbolism, especially in the novel *Woman Who Cried to the Black Moon,* this research seeks to reveal that literature not only reflects the reality of people's lives but is a medium that can be a guide for readers. In other words, literature is not just a passive reflection of social conditions but an active entity that plays a role in shaping and dephysicalizing reality itself (Bakhtin, 2004; Jacobson, 1987; Kristeva, 1980). It is a hermeneutic medium that allows readers to enter a contemplative dimension where they can reinterpret deeply rooted traditional values, as well as unravel the symbolic structures that are often hidden behind narrative texts. Moreover, by focusing on the politics of symbols in texts, this study confirms that every literary text cannot be separated from static representations and traditions. Thus, literature facilitates a continuous process of deconstruction to open up the possibility of the integration of modern values, which leads the reader toward intellectual emancipation.

2. Theoretical Framework

Literary anthropology basically positions literary texts as an existential representation of human experience that is tied to its cultural and social historical structures. In this view, Davis and Womack (2006) state that literature cannot be separated from the cultural context that surrounds it because each text carries traces of ideologies, traditions, and cognitive values that are formed in the symbolic structure of society. For this reason, through the anthropological approach, literature becomes a vehicle for the interpretation of life experiences structured by cultural symbolism, as well as a space in which collectives formulate their existence in the dialectic between tradition and change (Brandel, 2020; Steiner, 2024; Zhao, 2024) Therefore, literature is a dialectical reflection of the collective narrative about the articulation of power relations and dominant symbols in culture.

The literary, anthropological approach not only views literature as a purely aesthetic reconstruction, but it is also an ontological medium that facilitates the re-reading of social and symbolic reality (Boas et al., 2021; Clastres, 2020). In this context, literary anthropology becomes a theoretical instrument that allows us to trace the traces of local symbolic traditions and symbolic politics hidden in literary texts (Kristeva, 1986; Zhao, 2024). Tradition, which inherently contains ideological power, is not only reflected in literary narratives but is also articulated as a link between the past rooted in tradition and the future shaped by educational values. Thus, literary anthropology opens up an interpretive space where literature clashes as an existential mirror of the struggle for collective identity intertwined in cultural symbols.

Symbol politics, as explored in Geertz's (1973) thought, views symbols as not just representational entities but as an active medium that constructs and maintains the hegemony of power. Symbols in the context of culture do not stand neutral; they construct social reality through ideological processes that are internalized in the collective consciousness (Kellner, 2020; Mauzé, 2021). Symbolic politics is a mechanism for articulating invisible power. It infiltrates various forms: rituals, languages, and traditions, which serve as a device to affirm social hierarchies as well as norms that are continuously reproduced. For this, symbolic politics is integrated into life (Kellner, 2020; Kravchenko et al., 2020). Therefore, symbol politics becomes a latent force that regulates social relationships, including in the context of education, and reflects the values inherited from generation to generation.

Symbols in local traditions contain tremendous epistemological power. Symbols in tradition act as markers of moral, ethical, and pedagogical values that are internalized in people's lives (Pamungkas et al., 2021; Suprapto et al., 2023). To this end, contemporary literature, in the context of symbol politics, can be seen as a reflection and reframing of these symbolic forces. He reveals the ways in which local symbols influence the education system and the transmission of values embedded in tradition and culture (Chan & Lee, 2021; Pamungkas et al., 2023). Through the reading of symbols, literature allows for a critical exploration of the ways in which local traditions not only teach moral values but also form ideological structures that determine how future generations internalize the social hierarchy and ethical norms that are veiled in the education system.

Education in fiction is a dialectic between narrative aesthetics and didactic goals, which are fused in human experience. Fiction not only rests on the presence of a representational world but also functions as an epistemological medium that accommodates ethical and moral ideas implied in the construction of the story. In this perspective, fiction is considered mimesis (Barnashova, 2014; Ricoeur, 2016), which manifests the basic principles of social and existential life, which are then articulated through characters, plots, events, and conflicts that reflect the moral and cognitive dynamics of the collective. Through narrative dialectic, fiction facilitates implicit learning, in which the reader is confronted with the contemplation of the values of universality that are inherently pervasive in the storyline.

Ontology and fiction serve as a means of understanding the essence of humanity and policy formulation, where *aletheia* (the disclosure of truth) and *paideia* (moral education) are deeply related in the narrative web (Hutter, 2021, p. 53). The educational values contained in fiction are transformative. This allows the reader to enter a space of critical consciousness about the nature and complexity of life (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2023; Hrastinski, 2024; Lyngfelt et al., 2023). Physical learning is not explicitly didactic but is rooted in the power of imagination that stimulates the cognitive and affective development of the individual reader. In this view, fiction is not just a reflection of reality but an ethical laboratory in which human experience is explored, tested, and elaborated in an infinite space of interpretation, which invites readers to not only understand but also continue to deconstruct the essence of that educational value in their lives.

3. Methodology

3.1. Materials

The object of this research study is the novel *Women Who Cry to the Black Moon* (Purnomo, 2021). This novel is a contemporary Indonesian novel that was chosen as the main source of research because its content represents local traditions and cultural symbols of the people of Sumba, which is relevant to the focus of the research. The research data collected was in the form of texts containing cultural symbols, local traditions, and social representations related to the education system.

Secondary data sources include relevant previous research (i.e., Church, 2002; Creswell, 2014; Klarer, 2013) related to literary anthropology, symbolic politics, and education in literature. This research also involves literature from various disciplines, including literature, culture, education, sociology, gender, semiotics, politics, anthropology, structuralism, and deconstruction. By combining perspectives from these disciplines, this research creates a hermeneutic space that allows for dialogue between literary texts and the socio-political context that surrounds them. Through this approach, literature is not simply analyzed as a passive representation but as a dynamic arena in which traditional symbolism and

educational values are intertwined in a dialectical interaction that triggers the deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning.

This methodology underlines fiction as an ideological locus in which power relations and traditional norms are questioned and re-articulated in a narrative laden with symbols. This approach seeks to penetrate the surface of the text to uncover how literature can function as an agent of transformation, which not only preserves but also allows the reader to reflect on the legitimacy of inherited social structures. Thus, literary interpretation shows a significant contribution in shaping, as well as disrupting, the established socio-cultural order.

3.2. Procedure

The analysis process began with conducting an in-depth reading of the novel to identify key elements of local tradition in the politics of symbols about those articulated in meta-narratives (Barthes, 1964; Lyotard, 1994). This reading was focused on parts that describe rituals, symbols, and social activities related to the culture of the people of Sumba. These elements were then analyzed using a hermeneutic approach to uncover the hidden meanings behind the text (Porter & Robinson, 2011; Ricoeur, 2016). In the analysis process, the researchers applied the Deconstruction interpretation technique (Derrida, 2001; Smith, 2008). The focus of the exploration of meaning was how local traditions are used as a tool to express the politics of symbols and how such symbolism affects the educational narrative hidden in the text.

The next stage was to conduct a thematic analysis of the data that had been collected, focusing on the form of local traditions, symbolism, and educational implications. This process included encoding the data according to predetermined thematic categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). At this stage, the findings were analyzed using concepts from:

- **Anthropology** that helped in understanding how local traditions function as mechanisms that strengthen social structures, such as in the practice of *Wulla Poddu*.
- **Symbolism** that providede a framework to reveal the role of cultural symbols as an ideological tool that maintains cultural power and identity.
- **Cultural studies** that highlighted rites and norms as normative components that form collective understanding and social norms.
- **Literature** that served to explore how fiction reflects and reflects on the relationship between identity, tradition, and education.

By integrating these perspectives, this research connects the cultural elements identified in the text with the concept of education. This is to reveal how symbolism in the novel not only reflects tradition but also conveys hidden educational values. The symbolism and ideology revealed in the narrative help articulate the dialectical relationship between local culture and the influence of education in shaping collective consciousness and social norms.

As a form of validation, this study uses data triangulation and data sources (Carter et al., 2014; Creswell, 2014). Data triangulation is carried out by comparing data with relevant theories according to their respective indicators. Meanwhile, triangulation of data sources was carried out by comparing the findings with other relevant studies. This triangulation is carried out to ensure the interpretation of cultural symbolism and symbolic politics in the meta-narrative of literary texts. After all, the stages are carried out, a provisional conclusion is determined. After the provisional conclusion, the overall verification of the research results was carried out. If it is confirmed that it is relevant, then the final conclusion of the research will be carried out.

4. Results

4.1. Cultural Dynamics in Novels

The cultural distribution in the novel *Women Who Cry to the Black Moon* reveals the structure and cultural dynamics of the people of Sumba, where the form of culture is depicted in several aspects. To determine the cultural system and components contained in the novel, the researchers used content

structure analysis guided by cultural anthropology, symbolism, and literary studies. Cultural elements are identified based on the frequency of occurrence in the novel's narrative as a representation of the social structure of the Sumbanese society. This is an effort to understand the dynamics of cultural symbols as an ideological device and social control mechanism that is integrated into the community order. Based on the research findings, the cultural dynamics in the novel are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Cultural Dynamics in the Novel Women Who Cry to the Black Moon

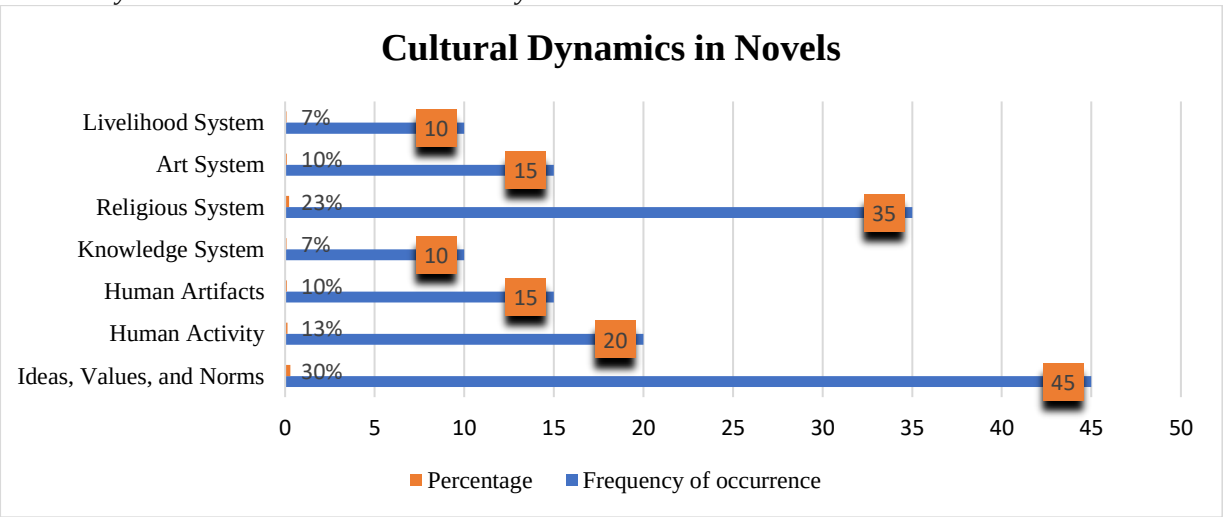


Figure 1 illustrates that ideas, values, and norms dominate the topic of the story (30%). This indicates that local traditions, such as the prohibition of one-tribe marriage, *the belis* system, and the *Wulla Poddu rite*, play a fundamental role in regulating the social order and collective identity. This novel does not only describe tradition as a cultural setting but as a normative framework that binds individuals to a very complex symbolic order. Similarly, the religious system (23%) is a key element that affirms that spirituality and religion are pillars that support the social structure and collective ethics, which function as symbolic political tools that legitimize customary power. By highlighting the presence of religious rites and symbols, the novel reflects on the influence of the religious system that functions as a social control mechanism that regulates behavior and maintains the status quo.

Meanwhile, other cultural elements, such as human activities (13%), human works (10%), and art (10%), show the practical and material dimensions of Sumbanese culture. Activities such as weaving, making machetes, and using artefacts are not only aesthetic expressions, but they are also status symbols and a medium for communicating cultural values. This underscores that culture, material, and art are integral parts of cultural identity (Davis & Womack, 2006; Hoel & Carusi, 2018; Razzhivin et al., 2019). It plays an important role in cultural sustainability. However, the lower frequency of knowledge systems (7%) and livelihood systems (7%) suggests that the narrative focus in novels is on normative and symbolic aspects rather than ecological and economic adaptations. In this case, it can be said that the novel *Women Who Cry on the Black Moon* seeks to position traditions and symbols as the center of the cultural dynamics of Sumba society. The narrative structure in the novel highlights how literature functions in maintaining and reproducing social structures in the midst of changing times.

4.2. Tradition as a Dynamic Cultural Structure

The tradition in the novel *The Woman Who Cried on the Black Moon* is not only presented as a static entity inherited from their ancestors but as a cultural mechanism that is constantly undergoing reinterpretation in the interaction between individual agents and social structures. In this sense, tradition is a symbolic system that influences not only people's perspective on the phenomena around them but also a mirror of how they understand themselves in larger community relations (Davis & Womack, 2006). In this context, the Sumba tradition is projected as a very rich entity in terms of social and cultural symbols. For this, the representation of tradition in the novel is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Dynamics of the Cultural Structure of the Sumba Society

Culture of Sumba	Description	Representation in Novels	Meaning
Ideas, ideas, values	Contains ideas and values that govern society	• Prohibition of marrying one tribe; • *Belis* as a gift animal in marriage; • *Wulla Poddu* as a holy month to get the blessing of ancestors.	• Norms and values of maintaining social order. • Patriarchal dominance and hierarchy supported by culture
Human activity	Actions and habits	• Kiss the nose as a form of respect • Weaving as a routine for Sumba women	• The formation of patterns of social interaction and gender roles • Sustainable tradition
Human Artifacts	Artifacts and physical objects made by the community	• Machete as decoration and protective device; • Mamuli as a symbol of women's protection • Woven fabrics as traditional works	• Representasi material dari kebudayaan yang mengandung simbolisme social dan gender
Knowledge System	Pengetahuan tentang ilmu obat tradisional	• Daun untuk mengobati luka	• Harmonization of the relationship between nature and humans for the sustainability of life
Religious System	Spiritual beliefs and practices	• Merapu as a Sumba culture that regulates spiritual life • Wulla Poddu as a holy month to honor ancestors	• The need to maintain a spiritual connection with ancestors and nature to form cultural and social identities
Art System	Art that reflects culture and aesthetics	• The machete as a decoration and masculinity • Sumba woven fabrics with distinctive motifs as part of the art system	• Art as a medium of cultural expression and identity, as well as a symbol of status and social function in society
Livelihood	Traditional community work	• Raising cattle and buffaloes as a source of income • Concocting leaves as a traditional remedy	• Reflects the adaptation of the community to the environment and available natural resources

Through the data findings illustrated in Table 1, it can be understood that the traditions, values, and cultural practices of Sumba have many functions for the people of Sumba. Various forms of culture are symbols that shape social identities and realities (Brandel, 2020; Kristeva, 1986; Mbarachi & Igwenyi, 2018). Each aspect reflects the complex interplay between tradition and modernity. For this reason, the Marapu belief, for example, is not only a bridge between material and immaterial but also serves as an ontological framework that underlies the understanding of the Sumbanese people about their existence. In addition, the social and spiritual symbolism contained in cultures such as *Wulla Poddu* and *Belis*, as seen in Brandel (2020), reflects the principles of metaphysics, which define the moral order and power relations in society. Therefore, this novel describes the process of tradition operating as a system of meaning that regulates behavior and social interaction, as well as affirming collective identity in the midst of social change.

However, the representation of tradition in this novel reflects the dialectic between structure and agency. Tradition is presented as an entity that is continuously undergoing reinterpretation through the interaction between individuals and social structures. For this, society still has space to respond, adapt, or even oppose the norms or values inherited by their ancestors (Pamungkas et al., 2024; Smith, 2008).

This can be seen, for example, in weaving activities and nose kiss greetings, which show that traditions are carried out and reflected in concrete actions. In addition, this novel also depicts tradition as an arena about the dynamics of power and resistance, especially in the context of gender and patriarchal relations, which are immortalized through cultural symbols. Thus, tradition not only functions as a social control mechanism but also as a space and identity that is constantly negotiated and reconstructed in the face of modernity and social change.

4.3. Marapu Ritual Traditions: Power Relations, Symbolic Politics, and Social Control

The Marapu ritual in the novel *Women Who Cry to the Black Moon* describes the function of tradition as an instrument of social control. In Bell's (2003) view, ritual cannot be just a ceremonial act, but it needs to be seen as a text that has a very complex meaning, full of symbolic layers, which serves to affirm the existing cultural structure (Bosman, 2019; Liu & Wang, 2021). Through the in-depth structure of *Wulla Poddu*, this novel reveals that tradition is not only an expression of spirituality but also a symbolic political tool that legitimizes power relations for social order. *Wulla Poddu* is also not only a means to ask for the blessing of ancestors, but it is also a vehicle to strengthen social cohesion through ancestral symbolism that is closely attached to the people of Sumba.

However, this dominance cannot go on without criticism. In the novel, there is a dynamic of resistance, especially from the character Magi Diela, who begins to question the restoration of traditional practices in modern society. This character represents a generation exposed to modernity, which reads a more critical view of tradition. This resistance raises a very fundamental dilemma: should tradition be preserved if the values it embodies are contrary to the principles of modernity and human rights? This question opens up space for critical reflection on the function of tradition as a medium of social control, as well as affirming the customary authority that regulates the attitudes and norms of society. In this context, traditions such as *Marapu* and *Wulla Poddu* must be seen not only as cultural expressions but also as Prempeh (2022) views tradition as an arena of contestation between tradition and modernity (Barro, 2000).

For this, Table 2 provides a more comprehensive overview of the hierarchy of local traditions depicted in the novel. Traditions such as *Wulla Poddu* and *Marapu* serve not only as a legitimacy mechanism for customary authorities to maintain social order, but they also face challenges from younger generations, who are beginning to criticize values that are considered less relevant to the modern era. Similarly, traditions such as Married Bride and *Belis*, emphasize power relations and gender hierarchies. Although, in this context, the tradition is called into question for perpetuating injustice and exploitation (Lorber, 2010; Shastri, 2014). Based on this assumption, Table 2 provides an overview of the complexity of traditions, which reflect the tension between culture and the demands of social change.

Table 2
The Hierarchy of Local Traditions in the Woman Who Cried to the Black Moon

Tradition	Description	Question and Symbolic Functions	Challenges of Modernity
Wulla Poddu	An annual ceremony to ask for the blessings of ancestors and balance the relationship between humans and nature	• Strengthening social cohesion, • Legitimacy of customary authorities	Questioned by the educated younger generation
Marapu	Belief in ancestral spirits as intermediaries	• Source of spiritual legitimacy • Determinants of social norms	Criticized as a relevant system in the modern context
Married Bride	Marriage traditions in which women are captured as part of the customary process	• Affirming gender hierarchies and power relations between families	Considered a practice that perpetuates gender injustice
Belis	The dowry system in the form of horses and weaving as a symbol of social status and relationships between families	• Strengthening family relationships and symbols of wealth	Criticized for being exploitative and commercial in marriage

Table 2 not only illustrates how each tradition functions within a social structure but also highlights how traditional practices are subject to criticism in the context of modernity. This shows that tradition is not a frozen entity but a dynamic field of interaction, where old and new values face each other (Liska, 2013) and where the recession of traditional authority becomes part of the process of social transformation (MacLeod, 2018; Sonolet, 2018) Through this analysis, this novel offers a reflective discourse on the sustainability of tradition and its implications for identity and power relations in contemporary society. Traditions such as *Wulla Paddu* and *Merapu* in *Women Who Cry to the Black Moon* are not just social control mechanisms but also representations of the ideological system that governs and defines the collective identity of the people of Sumba. *Wulla Poddu*, as a rite that marks the holy month, serves as a cultural instrument to reinforce the boundary between the sacred and the profane, while affirming the position of spiritual authority in the social hierarchy. Through this rite, social control is not only carried out explicitly through customary rules, but also through the internalization of values and norms that have been passed down from generation to generation. Reaping, on the other hand, as a metaphysical entity, embodies the cosmological principles that govern the moral order and relations between man and the universe. This belief becomes a symbolic framework that justifies the status quo, giving legitimacy to the existing social hierarchy. However, in this novel, the tradition is not present in a monolithic form; It undergoes deconstruction and reiterification, especially when it encounters the critical views of the educated younger generation. They began to question the authority legitimized by tradition and challenged the symbolic boundaries that had been considered sacred.

In the context of Bourdieu's (2018) symbolic political theory, *belis* and *marriage* are concrete examples of how "symbolic capital" operates in society to maintain power relations. *Belis*, which on the surface appears to be part of the practice of marriage, actually has a deeper meaning, namely as a tool to assert social hierarchy and economic power. The ability of the male family to pay the *Belis* became a measure of wealth and social status, placing women as a commodity determined by economic and symbolic transactions (Bourdieu, 2018; Sonolet, 2018). Thus, *Belis* functions not only as an economic medium but also as a symbolic mechanism that reproduces and affirms dominant relations. Meanwhile, the *capture marriage* shows how the female body becomes a field of contest for patriarchal power, where this act of "arrest" stops the takeover of women's rights to the body and agency. The novel critically reveals how these practices are not just cultural heritage but are part of an ideological system that manifests patriarchal dominance. Through characters who oppose these practices, the novel invites the reader to question the legitimacy of customary symbols and how they are used to regulate and control individual behavior, especially society, in a patriarchal social context. In other words, the novel serves as a medium of criticism of how symbolic capital is used to support exploitative and degrading power structures.

4.4. Reflections on Literature and Education in the Context of Tradition and Modernization: Dynamics of Emancipation and Integration

Contemporary literature often articulates education as a paradox: it functions as an emasipatorial force as well as an agent of alienation (Harper, 2018; Kopnina, 2020; Perraton, 2020). In the *Woman Who Wept to the Black Moon*, education allows characters like Magi Diela to deconstruct the restrictive symbolism of tradition and create space for critical reflection on customary norms such as *Belis* and Married Bride. This affirms the role of education as a tool of social transformation that encourages recession to patriarchal structures and opens up possibilities for gender equality. However, on the other hand, modern education also has the potential to cause a disconnect with local cultural roots, creating an epistemological tension between tradition and modernity (Perraton, 2020; Wang et al., 2024). This invites debate about the extent to which education should function as an agent of change and how it can bridge the gap between respect for tradition and criticism of oppressive aspects.

To this end, education in this novel becomes a tool of deconstruction against the authority of tradition, bringing a new perspective that challenges the status quo. However, it also raises questions about how modern education can strike a balance (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2023) between deconstructing repressive traditions and respecting the integrity of cultural identity (Derrida, 2001; Sherwood et al., 2024). In this discussion, it is important to raise how education can navigate between these two poles,

offering an approach that is not only critical but also appreciates the complexity of the relationship between tradition, modernity, and identity. For this reason, education needs to be seen as a dialogical process that allows for the negotiation of meaning, where modern values can be integrated with tradition without having to negate the two. With this approach, the complexity of the role of education in the context of contemporary literature is considered important, especially in facing the challenges of modernity and preserving cultural heritage. This interpretation will not only invite critical reflection on the function of education, but also provide an in-depth view of how literature can be a medium to understand and articulate the interaction between tradition and modernity. For this, the following Figure 2 seeks to visualize the stages of interaction between literature and education, from the representation of tradition to the transformation and integration of values in society. This diagram will illustrate the emancipatory stages through five interrelated stages, illustrating the dynamics between the acceptance of tradition, criticism, and the attempt to find harmony between local values and the principles of modernity.

Figure 2
Literary and Educational Interaction

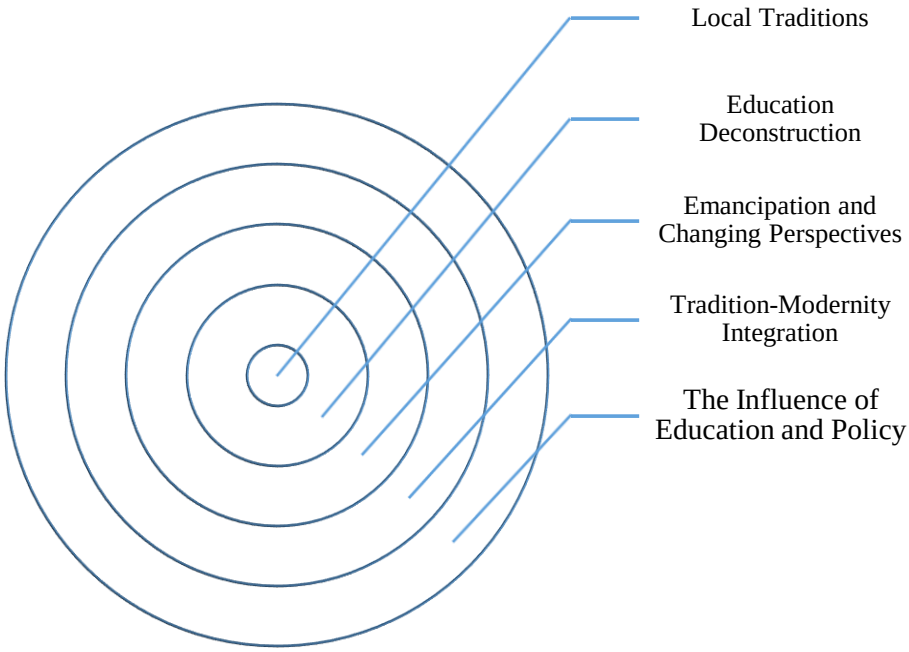


Figure 2 includes five stages that show the role of literature as a reflective medium that connects tradition with modern education, bringing the reader into a process of reflection. Each stage reveals different aspects of this interaction, from the representation of tradition to the influence on more inclusive education policies. For this, the stages of interaction are described as follows.

1) **Representation of Local Traditions**

   At this stage, literature acts as a cultural mirror that depicts local traditions, including the values, norms, and symbolism that shape social identities and structures.

2) **Criticism and Deconstruction through Education**

   Modern education introduces a critical perspective that encourages readers and characters to question and deconstruct traditional symbolism that is repressive or patriarchal. This process serves as a deconstruction of the authority of tradition, allowing individuals like Magi Diela to criticize and doubt existing values.

3) Emasipasi and Changing Perspectives

This stage shows the role of literature as an emancipatory space, where a transformation in the perspective of tradition and modernity occurs. For this, education acts as a catalyst that opens up space for critical reflection and awareness of universal values such as equality and human rights.

4) Integration and Dialogue of Tradition-Modernity

Literature offers narratives that allow for dialogue between tradition and modern values, fostering inclusive social change without sacrificing cultural identity. In this context, literature acts as a medium to enable this dialogue and find a middle ground in the face of the tension between tradition and modernity.

5) Influence on Education and Policy

The insights gained from this critical reflection influence educational and policy practices. Education is evolving into an instrument that not only transfers knowledge but also forms critical awareness, respects diversity, and promotes equality through more inclusive and reflective education systems and policies.

This confirms that literature acts as a catalyst for social change that operates at a symbolic and ideological level, allowing the deconstruction of the traditional order that has taken root while creating an educatively critical space for reflection and change. More than just a representation of reality, as claimed (Perraton, 2020), literature opens a sharp dialogue between criticism of tradition and the integration of modern values, thus forming a dynamic cycle that continues to revolve and revive the discourse of emancipation. In this context, Liska (2013) considers that literature is not only a tool of criticism but a medium of cultural philosophy that bridges the dialectic between tradition and modernity, allowing the search for justice and equality that is more inclusive. By facilitating continuous reflection, literature offers a conceptual framework that allows societies to question the legitimacy of old values and accommodate more progressive and just social transformations, making them central to the ideological and social changes of the local cultural context.

5. Discussion

This research underlines the importance of local epistemological traditions that operate not only at the surface level of culture but also as a fundamental substrate for existing socio-political dynamics. Local traditions, in this view, become a symbolic matrix that strengthens the social order (Bakhtin, 2004; Barthes, 1964; Liska, 2013) as well as an arena where the meaning of the text is constantly deconstructed, reproduced, and negotiated into other meanings (Critchley et al., 1996; Derrida, 2001). This process is not static but involves a dialectic between the effort to maintain the continuity of local identity and the modern forces that seek to break down these symbolic boundaries. Thus, tradition is not just a historical reference but an articulation site that opens up space for political and ideological contestation. This suggests that in an increasingly homogeneous global context, local traditions play a key role as a repository of recession against global hegemony (El-nashar & Nayef, 2023), offering an ontological basis to strengthen identity narratives amid the tide of globalization.

In the symbolic political dimension, local traditions find themselves transforming into tools loaded with the interests of power and social litigation (Kellner, 2020; Rival, 2021). Traditional symbols, although they appear solid in form, are fluid in meaning and able to be adapted and mobilized by social and political actors according to their contextual interests. Within this framework, symbolic politics works through the reactivation of traditional symbols, both to consolidate patriarchal power and to oppose the established social order. On the one hand, tradition serves as a social control mechanism that strengthens hierarchies, but on the other hand, it also opens up opportunities for deconstruction and change. This interpretation shows how local traditions, when placed in the dialectic with modernity, are not only the object of academic study but also the arena of ideological struggle that is constantly negotiated.

In the dimension of education, this study highlights the important role of education as a reflective medium that facilitates the process of deconstruction and representation of local traditions. This is

because education, a broader philosophical perspective, can be understood as the practice of enlightenment (Aufklarung) that allows individuals to dismantle the ideological symbols that underlie traditional structures (Taylor et al., 2023; Zakirova & Vlasova, 2024). Education here serves not only as a tool for producing knowledge but also as a critical agent of change, arming individuals with the ability to question the legitimacy of tradition in a contemporary context (Matthews, 2024). Education, in this case, is inseparable from the process of cultural emancipation, in which individuals are positioned as critical subjects capable of negotiating traditional meanings in the context of modern values, such as human rights and gender equality.

The implications of this study open up a new discourse on how local traditions can be integrated into more inclusive education and cultural policies. This research shows that local traditions in literature if approached with a critical attitude through education, can be a resource that enriches our understanding of cultural diversity and a tool to create a more equitable social order. However, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged, especially in terms of generalizing findings. The focus of research on the representation of a particular tradition limits its scope to include a wider variety of local traditions. In addition, the study has not fully explored the impact of global forces, such as neoliberal economics or cultural imperialism, in reshaping the meaning of local traditions. Therefore, further research is expected to expand the study to the realm of global politics and economic institutions to further uncover the function of literature and tradition that can be used as a tool of resistance or domination in the global context. Policy recommendations include the development of an education system that is able to critically bridge literature, local traditions, and modern values without losing the cultural substance possessed by these traditions.

Although the results of this study offer in-depth insights into the role of religious ideas, ideas, values, norms, and systems in order to maintain social structures, it is important to note that these findings are based on the analysis of one case, namely the novel *Women Who Cry to the Black Moon*. Therefore, although this study describes the cultural dynamics in the context of Sumba society, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all societies or to any literary manipulation that raises similar themes. This is because each literature has a different cultural framework, including symbols that are always dynamic, so a critical approach needs to be applied selectively depending on the cultural context that the analysis is focused on. This limitation actually opens up space for further research to explore how the interaction between tradition, modernity, and education is reflected in narrative texts in complex cultural dynamics.

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